

Serial No. 09/993,175

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1-19 (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) A flexible arm for holding a medical instrument, comprising:
a plurality of links each having a hole therethrough and a proximal surface and a distal surface;
an elongate element extending through the holes, wherein tensioning the elongate element locks the plurality of links in a fixed orientation; and
a ~~screen frictional element~~ positioned between an adjacent proximal surface and distal surface of the at least a pair of the plurality of links, the ~~screen frictional element sized to enhance enhancing-frictional engagement over a substantial area of the adjacent proximal surface and distal surface of the at least a pair of the plurality of between adjacent links~~ when the elongate element is tensioned.
21. (Currently Amended) The flexible arm of claim 4920, wherein: the frictional element is a screen.
22. (Currently Amended) The flexible arm of claim 2021, wherein: the screen is not attached to the links.
23. (Currently Amended) The flexible arm of claim 2021, wherein: the screen layer is attached to one of the links, a side of the link to form a side which is harder than another side of the link.
24. (Currently Amended) A device for holding a medical instrument, comprising:
~~a flexible an arm~~ having a plurality of links;
~~an elongate, a flexible element~~ extending through the plurality of links;
~~a tensioning device movable between a first position and a second position, the first position tensioning the plurality of links to lock the plurality of links in a fixed position, the second position permitting the plurality of links to move relative to one another; and~~
a body, ~~the flexible arm being supported by the body; and~~

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a base link having a proximal end and a distal end, and being aligned with the body on the proximal end along which is pivotable relative to the body about an a first axis and being aligned with one of the plurality of links on the distal end along a second axis, wherein the second axis forms an angle with the first axis of between 45 and 90 degrees, the base link directing the elongate element at an angle relative to the axis.

25. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 24, wherein: ~~the base link directs the elongate element at an angle~~ is approximately 70 degrees. of 45-90 degrees relative to the axis.

26. (Original) The device of claim 24, further comprising:
a spring biasing the base link toward an unlocked position.

27. (Original) The device of claim 24, wherein:
the base link directs the elongate element to a position which is at least 0.30 inch offset from the axis.

28. (Original) The device of claim 24, wherein:
the base link directs the elongate element to a position which is at least 0.50 inch offset from the axis.

29. (Currently Amended) A device for holding a medical instrument, comprising:
a flexible arm having a plurality of links;
an elongate, flexible element extending through the plurality of links;
tensioning device movable between a first position and a second position, the first position locking the plurality of links in a fixed position, the second position permitting the plurality of links to move relative to one another; and
an actuator coupled to the tensioning device for moving the tensioning device between the first and second positions, the actuator being biased toward the first position so that the flexible arm is in the fixed position, wherein actuation of the actuator moves the first tensioning device to the second position so that the flexible arm is free to move.

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30. (Original) The device of claim 29, further comprising:

a retractor;

the flexible arm coupled to the retractor with a locking mechanism movable between locked and unlocked positions, the flexible arm being locked to the retractor when the locking mechanism is in the locked position;

the actuator being operably coupled to the locking mechanism, wherein actuation of the actuator moves the locking mechanism to the unlocked position.

31. (Original) The device of claim 29, further comprising:

a medical instrument coupled to the flexible arm, the medical instrument being pivotable relative to the flexible arm;

the actuator being coupled to the medical instrument so that actuation of the actuator permits the medical instrument to pivot relative to the flexible arm.

32. (Original) The device of claim 29, wherein:

the actuator is biased toward the first position by a spring.

33-48 (Cancelled)

49. (New) A flexible arm for holding a medical instrument, comprising:

a plurality of links each having a hole therethrough;

an elongate element extending through the holes, wherein tensioning the elongate element locks the plurality of links in a fixed orientation; and

a frictional element disposed about the elongate element and between adjacent links, the frictional element enhancing frictional engagement between adjacent links when the elongate element is tensioned, wherein the frictional element is not connected to either of the adjacent links.

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50. (New) A device for holding a medical instrument, comprising:

a body;

an arm having a plurality of links;

a base link disposed between the body and the flexible arm;

a flexible element extending through the plurality of links and the base link; and

a tensioning device movable between at least a first position and a second position,

the first position tensioning the plurality of links to lock the plurality of links in a fixed position, the second position permitting the plurality of links to move relative to one another;

wherein the base link has a proximal end and a distal end, and the base link is aligned with the body at the proximal end along a first axis and is aligned with one of the plurality of links at the distal end along a second axis, and the second axis forms an angle with the first axis of between 45 and 90 degrees.

51. (New) The device of claim 50, wherein the base link is pivotable relative to the body about the first axis.

52. (New) The device of claim 50, wherein the base link is curved.